

Students Relive Antarctic Exploration

By Patricia Brhel

If you squinted a little and their voices had been a bit deeper, you'd have thought that it was the crew of the Endurance that had formed a panel to answer questions and discuss their time, from 1914 to 1916, stranded in Antarctica along with their commander, Sir Ernest Shackleton.

Thanks to some vintage clothing and props, and coaching by Antarctic historian, amateur naturalist, explorer and kayak guide Louise Adie (Vesla), Cara Salibrici's sixth-grade enrichment class at Boynton Middle School was not only convincingly attired, but remarkably well rehearsed. They stayed in character while answering questions, a difficult thing for anyone to do.

The students worked hard for several months to pull together the program. After reading about the expedition, each student researched the crew member that he or she was representing and created journals with writing and drawings describing their experiences while stranded, but they were also very creative when describing what they ate and what it felt like to be stranded.

Their voices caught with emotion when they described having to kill the sled dogs that they'd taken along as working dogs, but had made pets of "carrying the puppies in our pockets" to prevent the dogs suffering from starvation when the food for them became scarce. They also made faces when comparing the taste and texture of penguins, dry and tough versus that of the

seals, fatty and fishy, that they hunted and ate when food and supplies for the humans ran out.

They skillfully answered questions about friendship, about Percy Blackburrows initial status as a stowaway. They described Shackleton's attempts to keep up group moral with games such as hockey and football, music, dog races and assigned chores before he took off to look for help. The group talked about a number of times they moved camp, from the time that the Endurance originally became stuck in the pack ice after entering it on Dec. 11, 1914. The ship became trapped on Jan. 19, 1915, and was crushed on Oct. 27 that year. It finally sank on Nov. 21, 1915.

Boats were launched to seek a rescue on April 9, 1916, and landed on Elephant Island, a small island just off the coast of Antarctica, on April 16. Shackleton and a few other men then left in a small boat that reached their original starting point, South Georgia Island, on May 10, about 18 months after their departure from that location.

All of the students agreed that they had learned the importance of team work and the need to persevere, even under difficult conditions. They learned that strength lies in unity and that following a dream can be hard. Several were impressed with what had to be given up in order to lighten their load as they moved about the ice floes. Shackleton set an example by giving up his much prized gold cigarette case, Hurley had to give up his photos as even a small amount of extra weight might have made

the difference in their struggle to survive. Several mentioned never wanting to see the cold again.

When they returned from this expedition most of the men became caught up in World War I and never saw each other again. Shackleton died of a heart attack in 1921. The students also noted that no one has ever found a trace of the Endurance. It still lies on the ocean floor just off the coast of Antarctica.

Shackleton had made a previous attempt to reach the south pole from the Ross Sea with his "Furthest South" expedition in January 1909, but fell short. He was followed by Amundsen, who succeeded in 1911 and Scott, who reached the pole in 1912.

The students in the cast included Olivia Ambrosetti and Kagan Dougherty as Second in Command Frank Wild, Maren Dilliplane as Navigating Officer Hubert Hudson, Maddison Huddle as First Officer Lionel Greenstreet, Emilia Stockwell as Second Officer Thomas Crean, Cameron Boda as

Third Officer Alfred Cheetham, Zoe Congdon as Chief Engineer Louis Rickinson, Aidan Setlock as Second Engineer A.J. Kerr, Eamon Colbert -Auble as Surgeon Dr. James McLroy, Kyle Fearon as Surgeon Dr. Alexander Macklin, Morgan Thayer as Biologist Robert Clark, Garrett Breen as Meteorologist Leonard Hussey, Mikayla McMahon as Physicist Reginald James, Jacob Engle as Motor Expert Thomas Orde-Lees, Darby Waller as Photographer Frank Hurley, Nicco Albertsman as carpenter Harry McNeish, Gabrielle Hagen as Cook Charles Green, Reilly Diamond as Steward Percy Blackborrow, Jade Gonzalez as Able Seaman John Vincent and Lilian Gunderson as Able Seaman Thomas McLeod.

The program was funded with an Ithaca Public Education Initiative (IPEI) grant and the Charles W. Brodhead Fund. It was the first of several grants awarded this year to classes and one of two Red and Gold grants throughout Tompkins County.

Child Abuse Prevention Program

The First Unitarian Society of Ithaca, in conjunction with the Advocacy Center of Tompkins County, will bring the "Pinwheels for Prevention" movement to life in Ithaca.

April is Child Abuse Awareness Prevention Month. Thousands of pinwheels have been distributed statewide by Prevent Child Abuse New York as a demonstration that we can prevent—not just intervene—in child abuse and neglect.

Pinwheels serve as symbols to remind us all children deserve a healthy, happy, safe childhood.

Visit the corner of Buffalo and Aurora streets to see the Pinwheel garden planted by members of the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca. For more information about how to prevent child abuse and neglect, or to schedule an Enough Abuse Campaign training contact the Advocacy Center of Tompkins County at 277-3203.

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